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The Imported Fire Ant - - -



Bureau of
Entomology
and
Plant Quarantine

Agricultural
Research
Administration

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The IMPORTED FIRE ANT is an annoying and destructive pest in some of the Southeastern States. It stings both man and animals and attacks various vegetable plants. The huge mounds that it builds in the fields to house its colonies interfere with agricultural operations as well as being unsightly. Infestations of this ant are heaviest in southwestern Alabama and southeastern Mississippi.

The sting that this ant inflicts causes a painful wound, which may fester and persist for several days. It is almost impossible to hire laborers to harvest truck crops in infested fields. These ants also attack and may severely injure newborn birds and animals. They may cause serious damage to young plants of cabbage, okra, collards, egg-plant, potato, and germinating seed corn.

How to Recognize This Ant

The imported fire ant looks very much like the common native fire ants. Its presence is recognized most readily by the mounds that the ants build. These mounds average about 15 inches in diameter and 10 inches in height, but in pastures and other uncultivated areas they may be 3 feet or more in diameter and 2 feet high. They are honeycombed but of firm construction.

This Bureau, in cooperation with State agencies in Alabama and Mississippi, is conducting studies to develop

methods of controlling this pest. Tentative recommendations based on these studies are given herein.

How to Control This Ant

Chlordane is the best insecticide yet found for controlling the imported fire ant. Emulsifiable concentrates and wettable powders containing from 25 to 75 percent of chlordane are available for use in sprays, or a dust may be used. Best results have been obtained with emulsion sprays.

In small areas of light infestations the treatment of individual mounds is practicable, but on extensive heavily infested areas it is advisable to treat the entire soil surface. The best time of year to apply the treatment is late fall or early winter, when there is less chance for the ants to recover and the mounds can be seen more readily.

The directions given for preparing sprays are for products of the strengths most commonly found on the market. If you use a product of different strength, calculate the amount that will give the same percentage of chlordane in the spray mixture. Read the label on the container.

Treatment of Individual Mounds

A spray for treating individual mounds should contain 0.37 percent of chlordane. Prepare such a spray as follows:

	<u>1 gallon</u>	<u>100 gallons</u>
Emulsifiable concentrate (45%) -----	2 table- spoonfuls	3 quarts
Wettable powder (50%) -----	1 ounce	6 pounds

Apply 3 gallons of spray to an average-size mound, saturating it and an area extending about 3 feet around it. Break the hard surface of the mound to permit better penetration of the spray.

If you use a dust, cover the mound with about 3 ounces of a 5-percent dust and rake it into the soil.

After 10 days to 2 weeks inspect the mounds and if you find any surviving colonies give another treatment.

In re-treatments use 1 gallon of spray or 3 ounces of dust to each mound.

Area Treatment

For treating infested areas use a chlordane spray. On uncultivated lands and in fields of crops not to be used for food or animal feed, 4 pounds of chlordane per acre is recommended. On lawns and parkways and in pastures, apply only 2 pounds per acre, in order to reduce the hazard to livestock, children, and pets. A good watering after the treatment will make it more effective and also further reduce the hazard to children and pets. If you use a power sprayer, apply this dosage in 50 gallons

of water, which will give a spray containing 0.5 percent of chlordane. Prepare such a spray from the commercial product as follows:

Emulsifiable

concentrate (45%) -----	1/2 gallon
Wettable powder (50%) ----	4 pounds

If you use hand equipment, reduce the amount of water, according to the type of sprayer, to that necessary to cover 1 acre with 2 pounds of actual chlordane.

If any survivors are found upon inspection after 10 days to 2 weeks, treat either individual mounds or the entire area again.

A square 200 feet on each side is approximately an acre.

PRECAUTIONS

CHLORDANE IS A POISON, AND SHOULD BE HANDLED AS SUCH. However, no harmful effects have been reported when it was used according to directions.

Avoid inhaling it. If you spill it on the skin, wash immediately with soap and water. Launder clothes that become contaminated. Keep livestock off treated pastures for at least 2 weeks. Do not permit children or pets to go on treated lawns until the insecticide has been washed into the soil by rain or by watering with a hose.

Prepared by the Division of Insects
Affecting Man and Animals.

The experiments upon which the recommendations given in this publication are based were conducted with funds authorized under the Research and Marketing Act.

The picture on the cover shows an imported fire ant in the act of stinging human skin (enlarged).

The scientific name for this ant is Solenopsis saevissima v. richteri Forel.



